

T H E
OCCASIONAL PAPER.

VOL. III. NUMB. III.

CONTAINING
TWO LETTERS.
O N E,

To the Reverend Dr. *Prideaux*, occasioned by some *Considerations* which he has offered to the *Dissenters*, in his 1st Volume of the *History of the Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jews and neighbouring Nations*.

A N O T H E R,
To the Author of this Paper, in relation to a Passage in the *Doctor's* Preface to the II^d Volume of *his History*.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. KNAPTON, at the *Crown* in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*; E. M. MATTHEWS, at the *Bible* in *Pater-Noster Row*; J. ROBERTS, in *Warwick-Lane*; J. HARRISON, under the *Royal Exchange*; and A. DODD, without *Temple-Bar*.
MDCCXVIII.

(Price Sixpence.)

OCASIONAL PAPER

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

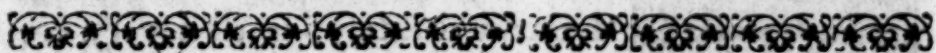


LETTERS.



THE *First* of the following Papers I receiv'd lately, with a very civil Letter from the Author, desiring me, if I thought it proper, to allow it a Place in the *Occasional Paper*, and to convey it that way into the Hands of the Learned Doctor to whom it is directed. The Nature of the Argument at first Thought occasion'd some Demur. But the very decent Manner of managing the Debate, has determin'd me to comply with my Correspondent's Request. I reckon I should shew myself a Bigot and a Party-man, which I would ever avoid, if I should refuse to let other Mens Thoughts come abroad in this Collection, tho' they should happen not to agree with my own; as long as the Rules of good Manners and Christian Charity are carefully observ'd. Free and calm Debates of the several Differences among Christians, appear to me the most effectual way to serve the Cause of Truth, Liberty, and Catholick Christianity, the avowed and constant Design of this Paper. And therefore, as I
now

now propose this Gentleman's Sentiments on one side to the World, so if any one will please to honour me with his Thoughts on the other, with such an exemplary regard to the Decorum of Character and a Christian Temper, he shall readily find a Place in an ensuing Paper. I publish this the more readily, that I may have an Opportunity along with it to send the Reverend Doctor my hearty Thanks for his uncommon Services to the Christian World and to the Advancement of Scripture-Knowledge. Having newly receiv'd a Letter myself upon an Argument near akin to the former; tho' it enters into the Debate of another Passage of the Doctor's, I have annexed it, for the same Reasons which induced me to publish the other. I have several other Letters by me, some of which I intend shall come abroad in my next Paper.



A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Prideaux, &c.

Reverend Sir,

IT is Impossible for me to say with how much Pleasure I have read that incomparable Performance of yours, *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and neighbouring Nations*; which is capable of serving a great many noble Purposes at once. There is both Instruction and Entertainment going along with it, of several Sorts. And it is particularly Useful to clear up the prophetic Parts of Scripture; upon which Account I value it extreamly, and am one among the many that return you Thanks for it; and thank God, who enabled you under so much Weakness and Pain to go thro' so Laborious a Piece of Service. May that Life be continued, that is so well employ'd; and those Labours succeeded, that are so
well

well adapted as well as design'd to do Good ; and those Weaknesses and Infirmities be remov'd, or at least kept under, that would incommode you in such Services or in any other. Your Book, Sir, is a Master-piece of the kind, and may serve both to correct the Errors of those that have gone before you, and to direct the Steps of those that come after you. And I am confident nothing but Ignorance and Envy can treat it ill. But I must not attempt to draw its Character ; I'll leave that to others. Only let me say it needs none, and will bear the best. And I only wish you had taken your Rise higher, and carry'd down your History lower.

And now after this Account, I can't tell how, methinks, to except against any thing in it. But I find my self oblig'd to do so, or otherwise Truth is like to suffer, and a considerable Body of Men, valuable for every thing that is valuable, will lie under an *Odium* that they by no means deserve. I hope then you will excuse my Freedom in it, since I can assure you, I design no disrespect to you, nor any injury to the Reputation of your Book, which indeed nothing that I could say can lessen. I value both the *Author*, and the *Performance*, even tho' it bears so hard, in one or two particular Places, upon the Cause and Character of those to whom I am firmly attached : And I would only do Justice to a good Cause and its Advocates, while I am doing you no harm.

The Passages I have to consider, lie in *Vol. I.* p. 374, 375, 378, 379. and the Substance of them (for I must not transcribe them, till I come to consider them particularly,) may be brought within a very narrow Compass. You tell us that *the Jews made use of a Liturgy in the Worship of God in their Synagogues in our Saviour's Time, and that our Saviour joined with them therein, when he went into their Synagogues, as he did every Sabbath-Day ; from whence you infer*

fer two things for the Consideration of Dissenters, viz. that he did not dislike Set Forms of Prayer, in publick Worship; and he was contented to join with the Publick in the meanest Forms, rather than separate from it: For such you say those were that were then made use of, in Comparison of those of the Church of England. And to make that appear you have set down their Eighteen Prayers that were of most account with them, most of which, if not all the 18, you say, were used in our Saviour's Time. And after that you tell us, that this may satisfy the Dissenters, if any thing can satisfy Men so perversely bent after their own Will, that neither your using Set Forms of Prayer in your publick Worship, nor your using such which they think not sufficiently Easing, can be Objections sufficient to justify them in their Refusal to join with you in them. For they have the Example of Christ in both these thus directly against them.

This looks pretty plausible, and passes, I doubt not, for Demonstration with some; but it is no more than Colour and Paint, and there is nothing Solid and Substantial in it: As I shall make appear by considering every particular Passage, wherein all this is contained, after having observed two things in the general.

The First is this, that there are no Persons, that I know of, who pay more respect to the Example of the Blessed Jesus, whether in Principle or Practice, than the Dissenters do: And if in any thing they differ from it, it is merely thro' Involuntary Ignorance.

For you then to suppose them, especially in the general (as you do) so perversely bent upon their own ways that nothing can satisfy them, is what one would not have expected from Dr. Prideaux. We are mightily concerned, as well as surprized, that so Great and Good an Author should run into the Virulence of Ignorant, Rash and Loose Scriblers against a Body of Men, who have given all possible Proofs of their Sincerity and Openness to Conviction; having never passed by
any

any thing of Moment that has been offered to them, from whatever Hand it has come; and who must be the greatest Fools in Nature to be *perverse*, having so many *sensible Arguments* to make them willing to be convinced. *Weak* they may be, and they could have bore that Charge well enough from you. But to go down to the latest Posterity in such a Performance as yours with the Character of *Perverseness*, is somewhat too grating to be passed by in Silence. And especially when there was so little Occasion for it from any thing that you had said to *satisfy* them; as I shall make appear presently. Pardon me therefore, Sir, if I take Notice of it with some Concern: And I am sure you will do it, if you will but make the Case your own.

But to say no more of that, for fear of saying too much, I observe,

2. What is very necessary to be observed here, that you have quite mistaken the Dissenters, when you suppose that nothing hinders them from joining with the publick Establishment besides *your using Set Forms*, and *your using those that are Mean*. For as for the First, *the use of Set Forms*, though there may indeed here and there be one among them that scruples the very Lawfulness of them, yet the Generality are of quite another Opinion: As you will find, if you do but consult K. Charles II^d's Declaration about *Ecclesiastical Affairs* quickly after the *Restoration*, or the *Conference at the Savoy*, or any other particular Writer of Note among them. They are all of them indeed against *Set Forms* in Opposition to *Free Prayer*, or exclusive of it. But they allow them in the general to be *Lawful*, and upon some Occasions *Expedient*. They very well approve of a *Liturgy* in the general, especially under some particular Circumstances, and with regard to some particular Persons, who can't do well without it, and therefore have no dispute with the Church of *England* upon

upon that Head. Nay, they would conform to the establish'd *Liturgy* in particular, if those *Amendments* were made in it which they cannot but judge necessary; and provided they were not *entirely confined to it*, so as never to vary from it in their *Ministrations upon any Occasion whatsoever*; and not obliged so to *subscribe to it and declare* concerning it as they are. So that we have no Controversy with you about *Set Forms* in the general, but about those particular Forms of yours; which, in our Opinion, carry with them some *Disagreeable, Disputable, and Dangerous Circumstances*. We do indeed give out Way of Praying, in the general, the Preference, before your's; (our Reasons for which we have often laid before the World; and I shall have occasion to mention some of them by and by;) But we are far from being Enemies to *Set Forms*, especially such as are pertinent, judicious, well composed, and regularly put together. We know that our way of praying is no more expressly commanded, than your's is forbid; and therefore tho' we think the former the more eligible, yet we don't at the same time condemn the later as sinful. In short, the Case stands thus, we apprehend that neither way of praying, whether with or without *Set Forms*, is expressly commanded or expressly forbidden; and therefore think, that we ought not to be bound up either way by any Humane Authority, whether *Civil* or Ecclesiastical, or both; but that a Man is oblig'd to take that way, which he finds best for himself, can give the best Reasons for, and which he is like to meet with the fewest Inconveniences from. On these accounts we are determined on the side of *Free Prayer*, before that of *Set Forms*, tho' with a favourable Opinion of *Set Forms*, and a good Disposition to them, at the same time. Of which we are willing to give the *Ch. of E.* a convincing Instance at any time, by going over to her in a Body, whenever she will be pleased

fed to set things upon the Foot, that not only we, but also some of her wisest and best Members have long wished and prayed and contended for: And which would mightily tend to her own Reputation, Advancement and Security; as Dr. Wake (then B. of Lincoln, now A. B. of Canterbury) has sufficiently made appear in that admirable Speech of his in the H. of L. at the time of Dr. Sacheverel's Trial. And I could heartily wish we had another from him of the same strain now, which in all probability would do more good, his Interest and Influence being so much increased by his Preferment to the *Archiepiscopal See*.

And as for the *Second*, the *Meanness of your Set Forms*, tho' that is one thing which the Dissenters object against Conformity, yet that is *but* one Thing, and not the main thing neither. We object most against the *Restraints and Impositions* that go along with them, and the *Subscription and Declaration* that are required of us in order to our joining in them. And I desire this may be taken notice of, because of the use that I shall make of it in the process of this Debate.

These Things being premised, let us see now what you have to say to us. And, First, you tell us that the Jews had *Liturgies*, in which were all the prescribed *Forms of their Synagogue-Worship*. Now tho' you don't particularly apply this to the Dissenters, yet I can't but think it is your design that they should apply it to themselves, and others at least may apply it to them, and have done * so, and therefore I shall take it in my way and consider it a little.

And here I allow you the Fact to be true, and that they had a *Liturgy* too from the time of *Ezra*, tho' none before, as *Vitringa* observes out of *Mai-*

* *Vid. Bennett's Brief History, &c.*

monides, Lib. 3. Cap. 14. p. 1032. But I can't see what use can be made of this in the Controversy between you and us. It will by no means serve your Cause, or injure ours. For this is not sufficient Proof for so much as Conformity to a Liturgy in general, in Case we scrupled that, as we do not; and much less is here any Proof for Conformity to your Liturgy in particular.

1. Here is no sufficient Proof for so much as Conformity to a Liturgy in the general; so that in Case we scrupled that, as we do not, this could not reconcile us to it; and that not thro' any *Perverseness* of our's, but for want of sufficient Force in the Argument it self. For pray, Sir, where is the Force of this Argument, They had a Liturgy and conformed to it, and therefore we must have one and conform to it too? Must we have, and do, every thing that they had and did; as upon this way of arguing we must? No certainly. For then we must have Sacrifices too, and abundance of other Things which it is needless to mention. We can be no farther bound to imitate them, than as the Reason and Nature of things, and Agreement in Circumstances, and the like, requires. We must therefore be determined in this Point, not meerly by their having a Liturgy and their Conformity to it, but by considering the Reasons upon which they went. And if they will not hold in our Case, as I am inclined to think they will not, because we certainly stand upon quite another Foot than they did, as having more Advantages and better Helps for another way of praying than they had, we are still but where we were, and our Nonconformity to a Liturgy may still for any thing in this Argument be as defensible as ever.

And much less 2. Is here any Argument for Conformity to *your* Liturgy in particular; no more than it would be to the *Romish* one, or to any other.

ther. The Argument must run thus, the *Jews* conformed to *one*, therefore we should conform to *this*. And any other Liturgy, let it be Good or Bad, would step in with the very same Pretence. Now an Argument that will equally serve for all Liturgies, will serve for none. But not to insist upon this, the Question here is, whether the *Jewish* Liturgy was the same with your's? If not, we are still safe in not conforming to your's; even supposing that we are obliged to follow the *Jews* Example, which really is not the Case. In order therefore to make so much as a plausible Argument of it, you must prove that the *Jews* conformed to such a *Liturgy* as your's, for *Matter, Method and Expression*; and that it was used in the same way, both by Clergy and Laity, with the same *Ceremonies and Gestures*; and that it was attended with the same *Circumstances*, viz. that it was drawn up by *Men uninspired*, that there was no manner of *Liberty* allowed to vary from it, or add to it, upon any *Occasion whatsoever*, and that there went such a *Subscription and Declaration* along with it as there does with your's. Unless you can do all this, we are still but where we were, and their Example can no ways determine us in this Controversy. And how you will do this, I can't conceive. If *Vitringa* your Favourite Author, and others, have given a true Account of their *Liturgies*, nothing in the World could be more different from them, in all the main disputed Circumstances, than your's is: As I could easily prove, if there were any Occasion for it, and will do it whenever there is so. And indeed if their Example is to determine us in this Case, we are to go throughout with it, and not only to use a *Liturgy*, but *their's* too, or at least one as like it as may be; for so far as we differ from them, so far we run from their Example, and therefore, upon this Principle, are so far in the wrong. The Dissenters then are still safe in not

conforming to the *Liturgy* of the *Ch. of E.* ; and that upon this very Principle on which they are urged to it, because they don't run farther from the Example of the *Jews* in not conforming to the *English* *Liturgy*, than the Churchmen themselves do in conforming to it, when this is so very different from that of the *Jews*.

But if you could shew your *Liturgy* to be like *Theirs*, it would still lie upon you to shew that the Principles upon which they went in their Conformity to their *Liturgy*, are such as we not only *may* but *ought* to act upon. Otherwise if their Principles will not suit our Case, we may still refuse to act as they did, even tho' their *Liturgy* and ours should be found to be the very same in every Circumstance that we dispute about.

But to come to somewhat more Material, even our Saviour's Conformity to the *Liturgy* then in use. Your Words are these. *The most solemn Part of their Prayers are those, which they call Shemoney Eshreh, i. e. the Eighteen Prayers. These they say were composed and instituted by Ezra and the great Synagogue ; and to them Rabbi Gamaliel, a little before the Destruction of Jerusalem, added the 19th against the Christians, who are therein meant under the Name of Apostates and Hereticks. It is certain these Prayers are very ancient. For mention is made of them in the Mishna as old settled Forms ; and no doubt is to be made but that they were used in our Saviour's time ; at least most of them, if not all the 18 ; and consequently that he joined in them with the rest of the Jews, whenever he went into their Synagogues, as he always did every Sabbath-day. And from hence two things may be inferred for the Consideration of our Dissenters. 1st, that our Saviour disliked not Set Forms of Prayer in publick Worship. And 2dly, that he was contented to join with the Publick in the meanest Forms, rather than separate from it. For those 18 Prayers, in comparison of those now used in our Church,*

Church, are very jejune and empty Forms. And that the Reader may see that they are so, I shall here add a Translation of them in the same Order as they are in the Jewish Liturgies, adding the 19th Prayer to them, which according to the same Order is the 12th in Number, as here recited. Then follow the Prayers you speak of, which I need not transcribe.

Now here I will allow that *most of these Prayers, tho' not all of them, were so ancient as you represent them to be, † and that they were used in the Synagogues in our Saviour's time. But I can't allow your Consequence from thence, viz. that he joined in them with the rest of the Jews, whenever he went into their Synagogues, as he always did every Sabbath-day. Supposing the Fact to be true, that he did join with the Jews in them, whenever he went into their Synagogues, which yet to me is very Suspicious, that does by no means follow as a necessary Consequence from their being used then and there; Because it is possible he might not go into their Synagogues, till after they were over. And his Chief Design, as I take it, in going thither, being not so much to worship with them, as to improve an Opportunity of teaching and preaching among them; this is by no means inconceivable. For this he might do after that Service was over, tho' not before. And this is the more Conceivable, because, as I shall shew presently, he could not, in all probability, join in them, at least in some of them, consistently with his Character and Circumstances; and then it must appear most likely that he would avoid being present at those Prayers, wherein it is probable he could not join.*

But let us enquire a little more distinctly, whether the Fact be true, which you lay down so po-

† *Vid. Vitringa, de Synag. Veter. Lib. 3. Cap. 14. p. 1046.*

sitively,

sitively, as if no doubt were to be made of it, and which you make the Ground-work of all your after Reasoning.

Now by Christ's *joining in the Jewish Prayers*, I suppose you mean *making them his own*, and *putting up the several Petitions along with them*, as they did: For his being *present at them*, if that were granted, or any thing less than *his making use of them himself*, and *worshipping God by them*, as they did; will not be sufficient to answer your Purpose. But that he did this, is so far from being *certain to me*; that the contrary seems far more *probable*. It is certain, that he could not join in them *all* on the *Sabbath-Days* whatever he might do on other Days, because they were not *all* used then. For *Vitringa*, if I take him right, says so *. Now it is certain he could not *join in any more* than were used; which were, according to him, only the *three First*, and the *three Last*, and one that goes under the Name of *Benedictio Media*, which seems to me to be the same with what he elsewhere calls *Benedictio Modim*. Vid. Cap. 17. p. 1086. Lib. 3. And for this he quotes *Maimonides's* own Words. and there is some room to doubt whether he ever *joined in these Seven*, at least in some of them, or in the most significant and material Passages of them. I desire any one to look them over, and he will easily see several things in them, which seem not consistent with Christ's Character and Circumstances, in the Sense in which the *Jews* intended them. It sounds harsh, for Instance, *that he should bless God for sending a Redeemer to the Jews*, and *that he should call God his Saviour*, as he must do in the use of the *First Form*:

* Octodenæ integre non recitabantur Sabbathis & Diebus Festis, sed illis diebus Septem tantum recitabantur Eulogiæ. *Vitringa*, Lib. 3. p. 1042.

And that he, who was against needless Repetitions; should bless God *four times* for raising the Dead; as he must do in the Use of the *Second*, and a fifth time, if he used the Doxology at the Conclusion, as the People did after the *Legatus Ecclesie* had gone through the Form. I can hardly think, that he would use the *Third*, as it was enlarged when used by the *Legatus Ecclesie*: (For it was much larger then, than it is here in your Specimen; which gives it us as it was used by every private Person, not as it was used in the Congregation by the Person that officiated.) In the enlarged Form there is this Passage ——— O our King, shew thy self Glorious out of thy Place, and Reign over us as we expect thee. When wilt thou reign in Sion in our Life and Days! Thou wilt dwell, and shalt be sanctified and magnified in the midst of Jerusalem thy City, in all Generations and to all Eternity. But could the Blessed Jesus say so? And so for Form the 17th ——— restore thy Worship to the inner Part of thy House, ——— reduc Ministerium Leviticum in adytum Domus tuæ. Vitringa, p. 1037. Or, ——— let us see thee, moved with pity, returning to thy City Sion. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who art about to restore thy presence to Sion; as *De Veil* has it, and elegantly says *Vitringa*. *Ibid.* The two following Forms, which praise God for his Mercies, run in a strain that intimate a Forfeiture and Unworthiness of them, and a vast Obligation to Divine Grace arising from that Consideration: Whereas he was not chargeable with any such thing; and therefore if he did use them, it must have been in a different Sense and Way from what thy did. As for the *Benedictio Media* indeed, I have not been able to meet with it in *Vitringa*, and therefore can't say whether he might not use that. I leave the Reader now to judge about his joining in these Forms, as he shall think best: I dare not assert positively that he could not, and did not, join in them. But it seems

seems very probable to me that he did not. And this I am sure of that he might very well fulfil *all the Righteousness* of that Law, under which he was born, without it. So that there was no absolute Necessity of his doing it, in order to acquit himself in that particular; which yet is all that can possibly be said of his Obligation to do so.

If we take in the rest of these 18 Forms, it will be still more Improbable, that ever our Blessed Lord should join in them; for either *they are proper for none but sinful and guilty Creatures*, of which Number he was not; or *they speak of a Saviour to come*, or have some other Circumstance attending them, which renders it very Improbable that he should ever make use of them, as any one will see who consults them.

The Evangelical History is wholly silent upon this Head: It does not speak one Word of his joining in their Prayers in the Synagogues. It tells us indeed of his going thither very frequently, and mentions several things which he did there, as *reading, interpreting, teaching, preaching, and working Miracles*, but says not one Word of his *praying with them* there. And tho' I would not press this Argument too far, yet give me leave to say, that it seems to me an unaccountable Silence, in Case he did *join* with the *Jews* in their Prayers; and especially if (as you must suppose to make any thing of your Argument from it,) he designed thereby to set After-Ages an Example of *joining in Set Forms* in the Worship of God. It is true, his History does not say that he did not *join in the Jewish Forms*, any more than that he did. But certainly the matter would not have been left dubious, but plainly related; at least the Probabilities would not have been greater against his joining in them, if he had designed to lead us by his Example to join in such Forms.

To

To conclude this Head, if he did join in them, I would ask, Whether he did it in their Way too? Which is to me a very material Question to be answered, in order to put an end to the Controversy between you and us. And here to omit other Circumstances, that went along with the use of these Prayers, (as the going three Steps back, and bowing five times very low, viz. at the Beginning and End of the *First Benediction*, at the Beginning and End of the *Benedictio Media*, and at the Conclusion of all. *Vitrin-ga*, p. 1086.) let me ask only, whether he said them over privately to himself; before they were said publicly by the *Legatus Ecclesie*, or the Person that officiated in the reciting of them? It can hardly be supposed that he should, since it was altogether needless, and withal *superstitious*. If he did not, what becomes of his Conformity, or how can it be urg'd upon us? He conformed but in part at most to the Matter, and not at all to the Manner: Such Conformity our Churchmen, I believe, would not be satisfy'd with from us. He used them, say you; but it was not in their way; what is this then to us who are to use your Forms in your way exactly, or else not at all?

And now, if our Saviour did not conform to the *Jewish* Liturgy, as it is very probable he did not; the Dissenters will have all the Advantage of his Example on their Side, which you pretend to lie on your's; and we can turn this Argument against you, as you have done against us: And if we were dispos'd to triumph, could do it here with as good a Grace as ever you have done.

Thus much for the Ground-work of your Reasoning with us; which being render'd precarious, at least, the *Considerations* you infer from it would not need to be examined, till that is better supported. But, however, to shew how good a Cause we have, I will give you that which indeed you have

no right to; and suppose, for Argument sake, *that the blessed Jesus did join with the Jews in their Liturgy; and proceed to examine the two Inferences you draw from it, for the Consideration of the Dissenters.*

The *First* is this, *That our Saviour disliked not Set Forms of Prayer in Publick Worship.* But what this signifies to us, I can't see. For we don't *dislike* them neither, any farther than he; but are perfectly of the same Mind with him, as far as we can judge, in this particular. And I am glad for your own Sake, as well as ours, that you have express'd your self with so much Caution and Prudence here. You only say, that he *disliked* not Set Forms, not that he *approved of them intirely*, or that *they were his Choice*, as some have inferred from your very *Premises*. But it was certainly more than they had Reason for. For suppose that he *joined in* the use of Set Forms, all that can follow from thence by any necessary Consequence, is, that he did not think Set Forms *Unlawful*, or at that time *Inexpedient*; not that he was *fond of them*, or *preferred them to our way of Praying*, by any Means. For if his actual *joining in Set Forms* showed his intire Approbation of them, in Opposition to our way of Praying; then his actual *joining in those mean Forms*, as you call them, must show his intire Approbation of *mean ones too*, and that in opposition to Forms drawn up with more Judgment and Care.

But to apply this to the purpose to which it is intended. If you design here to reconcile the Dissenters to the use of Set Forms as *Lawful*, and sometimes *Expedient*, it is needless; if you design to reconcile them to the use of Set Forms as *Preferable* to that of *Free Prayer*, this Argument from the supposed Practice of our Lord will not serve his Purpose. For he *disliked* not our way of Prayer neither, as I shall make to appear presently by his Use of it. And therefore this is no Reason to quit our way
OF

of praying for that : Because it stands upon the same foot with that, in respect of Christ's Example, whatever it may do upon other Accounts.

But to leave your First Inference, which concerns only Forms in General, about the Lawfulness or Expediency of which, in some Cases, we have no dispute with you ; I proceed to your

Second Inference, which is this, *That he was contented to join with the Publick in the Meanest Forms, rather than separate from it. For those 18 Forms, in comparison of those now used in our Church, are very jejune and Empty Forms.* And to prove this, you exhibit a Copy of them. Now the Design of this, is to let us see, that the *Meanness* of any particular Forms is no sufficient Objection against Conformity to them, but that Persons ought to be contented to join with the Publick in such, rather than separate from it. I say, that they ought to be so, not only that they may be so. For otherwise it will not serve your Purpose. Which is to reconcile the Dissenters to the Church Forms, even tho' they take them to be mean ones. Now to this I have the following Things to reply :

1. It does not appear that those Set Forms which the blessed Jesus joined with the Publick in, were so Mean as you represent them to be. Not those 18 particularly. And if we may judge of the rest by them, I can't but think they were far from despicable, especially at that time of Day. And I cannot but say with *Vitringa* * ——— *dignam* (*Liturgiam Judaicam* scil.) *quæ a Christianis cognoscatur : quorum plurimi utinam Sacra non multo tepidiùs & negligentius tractarent quam Judæi.* And I find him displeased with *Buxtorf*, for ridiculing some others of their Forms as Mean

C 2

as

* *Tom. 2. Cap. 17, ad fin.*

as these †, so much as he has done. That they were *Jejune* and *Empty* indeed in Comparison of what our Saviour could have composed himself, I readily allow: And that they were so too in Comparison of what the Forms of the Ch. of E. might be brought to. But that they are so in Comparison of what the *English* Forms are at present, I must beg leave to dissent; tho' I would not allow my self to disparage the Church Forms, out of *Conscience* as well as *Prudence*.

*But 2. Supposing them to have been so *Mean* as you represent them, and that the blessed Jesus was content to join with the *Publick* in them notwithstanding, rather than *separate*, this can be no sufficient Argument for us to join with the *Publick* in those that we think so, because such Forms would hinder our Edification more than they could his, who needed no such Helps for Edification as we do; and because they are more unsuitable to the Dispensation under which we live, than those were to that under which he lived. And this Alteration of Circumstances makes a vast difference between his Case and ours.

3. It is here supposed, that our Lord was afraid of *Separation*, that he apprehended it to be bad, and therefore that it was better for him to submit to some Inconveniencies than to run into it, and that upon this Principle he was contented to join in the *Publick* in the *Meanest* Forms. But how does all this appear? What Foundation is there for it? It is all *gratis dictum*, and ought to be made out before it can affect us.

But

† Videmus, quam sanctè & decorè secundum Instituta Veterum Sacra Synagogarum exercita sunt; quæ proin' nullam mentur Irrisionem aut Contemptum, cui illa sæpe exponit *Cl. Buxtorfius*, ceteroquin per Synagoram suam de Ecclesia Meritissimus, sed potius attentè a nobis considerari. p. 963.

But to close all, 4. It is here supposed, that our Lord did not *separate from the Publick*, no *not at all*, not so much as *Occasionally*; which is what I see no Reason to grant. The contrary rather appears to me, both *during his Ministry*, and *after his Resurrection*, especially *after his Resurrection*. 1. *During his Ministry*. That in this Period of Time he held *separate Assemblies* from the Publick, and that frequently, at least on the Week Days, is to me very probable. That he *preached* to the Multitude, among whom he wrought Miracles, is undeniable; and tho' it will not follow from thence only, that he *prayed* with them too, yet it will, I think, from other Circumstances. We read sometimes of his praying at the working of a Miracle; it is probable therefore he might do it at the preaching of a Sermon too. And with regard to his *Disciples* particularly, I think there is little Reason to doubt, that he held *separate Assemblies* with them, what ever he did with others. That *Prayer* of his on the Mount of Transfiguration was at a *separate Assembly* of himself and three of his *Disciples*. That mentioned *Luke xi. 1.* is in all appearance a *Social Prayer* with his *Disciples*. I gather this from their asking him to *teach them to pray* immediately after it was over. I allow indeed that this is no *certain* Argument that it was so, but it is a *probable* one, and that is all that I bring it for.

And give me leave here to say, That upon such Occasions it is likely he used the same way of praying as we do, not as you do. For if he did not, he must either use the *Jewish Forms*, or *some of his own composing*. But that he used the *Jewish Forms* is very unlikely, because they could not be pertinent on such Occasions, at least not always, or so much as in the general; and it is not likely he should ever use any that were not pertinent. And that he should *compose Forms* for them himself too is very unlikely:

likely : We have not the least Evidence for it, or the least Hint or Intimation about it, or any one Passage in all his History from whence it may be inferred. This is certain, that there was no necessity that he should do so, either upon his own Account, or upon the Account of those that joined with him. As he was so full of the Holy Ghost, there was no necessity of his using *Set Forms* for an help to himself ; and as he had so happy a Talent this way, there was no necessity of his using *Set Forms* for the sake of those that joined with him ; for he could keep up their Devotion without them, whatever we may do. Nay, I think we have some Evidence to the contrary, from his Disciples asking him to teach them to pray, after he had done praying, and his answering their Request : Neither of which had been necessary, had he made use of Forms among them. For they must have been acquainted with them without doubt, by having heard them frequently ; and therefore needed not to have made such a Request ; for could they ever suppose to pray in better Words and Forms than those which they knew him to make use of himself ? Their Request would thereupon have been needless ; and as such he would have returned no Answer to it at all, much less such a one as he did : For he needed but to have referred them to his own Liturgy, which they knew him to make use of, and that would have answered their Design effectually: But whether he prayed *with* a Form or *without* one in these *separate Assemblies* of his *during his Ministry*, I will not dispute at present. It is the Fact it self, that *separate Assemblies* were held by him with them during that time for Religious Worship, in which *Prayer* came in as a part, that I am now upon, and that I can't easily give up. And then 2. That *after his Resurrection* he held *separate Assemblies* with his *Disciples*, for Religious Worship, in which *Prayer* came

came in for a part, is what I think cannot well be disputed. We have not the least Hint, that during this Interval he ever enter'd into the *Jewish Synagogues* at all; and yet he was frequently with his *Disciples*. And can we think there was no *Religious Worship* at these Meetings and Intercourses between him and them? Or that *Prayer* was not a part thereof? Or that he prayed by the *Jewish Forms*, or any *Set Forms of his own composing*? The *Jewish Forms* could never be proper, when a new *Dispensation* was setting up. And *Set Forms of his own composing* would surely have been preserved by them for their own Use after his Departure; or they would have taken the same way themselves, which I shall show presently it is probable they did not. And let me observe, that it is here, if any where, that we are to look for the Example of Christ for our Direction in the Business of Prayer, as well as other Things, when he was *teaching his Disciples the Things of his Kingdom*, settling the Constitution of his Church, and putting Things in the Posture in which he design'd they should continue to the End of the World, and acting as the Head and Pattern of his Church in a very particular Manner. And if so, we seem to keep closer to his Example in our way of praying, than in yours.

These Reflections may I hope suffice for your *Second Inference*, that the blessed Jesus was contented to join in the *Meanest Forms with the Publick*, rather than separate from it.

I pass on now to what follows immediately after the 18 Prayers which you have transcribed. Since our Lord spared not freely to tell the Jews of all the *Corruptions* which they had in his time run into, and on all *Occasions* reproached them therewith, had it been contrary to the Will of God to use *Set Forms of Prayer* in his publick Service, or had it been displeasing to him to be addressed to in such mean Forms, when much better might be made;

made; we may be sure he would have told them of both and joined with them in neither: But he having never found fault with them for using Set Forms, but on the contrary taught his own Disciples a Set Form to pray by; nor at any time expressed a dislike of the Forms then in use, because of the meanness and emptiness of them, but always joined with them in their Synagogues in the Forms above recited; this may satisfy our Dissenters, if any thing can satisfy Men so perversely bent after their own Ways, that neither our using Set Forms of Prayer in our publick Worship, nor the using of such which they think not sufficiently Edifying, can be Objections sufficient to justify them in their Refusal to join with us in them. For they have the Example of Christ in both these thus directly against them. Now I shall not need to enlarge much here.

I allow, 1. that had it been contrary to the Will of God, to use a Set Form of Prayer in his publick Worship, the Redeemer would have told them of it, as he did of other Corruptions, and would never have joined therein. But this does not concern us, who don't say that the use thereof is contrary to the Will of God or a Corruption.

And what tho' he did join in them? We have not his Example against us here; because we can be no farther bound by his Example, than as the Reason and Nature of Things makes it requisite that we should be so, or than it was designed that we should be so. Let it be proved therefore, that the Reason and Nature of Things make it requisite that we imitate his Example in this Case, and that it was his Design that we should do so, and then I am confident there will not be many Dissenters in England. This is the shortest way with them, as well as the fairest. But till this be done, let us not be reproached as not treading in his Steps.

Besides, what tho' he did join in Set Forms with the Publick? That is no Proof, that he ought to have done

done so, or that he was *obliged* to do it, and not at Liberty to avoid or refuse it. And therefore it can't affect our Case, on whom it was pressed as a Duty to *join with the Publick in Set Forms*, and charged as a great Fault not to do so, so as that *nothing is sufficient to excuse us in refusing it*. Prove, Sir, that he lay under Obligations thereunto, and that he did it in Compliance with those Obligations, and that they were such as come into our Case too, and then you will say somewhat to the Purpose; but not till then.

2. As to *not reproaching them with the Meanness of their Forms*, which you say he would have done if it had been displeasing to God to be addressed to in such mean Forms when much better might have been made; this supposes what will not be granted you, *viz.* that these Forms were so Mean as you say they were, and that better might have been made then. They seem to me to have been Extraordinary, considering the Darkness and Degeneracy of those Times, (as even our Forms were at the Time of the Reformation,) and very well suited to the State of the Church at that Time, and that none could have made better for them then, unless St. John the Baptist, or the Blessed Jesus himself had composed them; and neither of them lay under Obligations to it; nor would the Jews have made use of them if they had done it, they were so prejudiced against both, and so Tenacious of their Customs and Traditions.

And supposing too that their Prayers are Mean, in comparison of what they might have been, and yet that God was not displeased with them, tho' they were so, and that he is not so with any other mean Forms neither; these can be no Reasons why the *Dissenters* should not press for a Reformation in your Forms, which they look upon to be Mean, before they *join with you in them*; because it is cer-

D

tainly

tainly *more pleasing to God*, to pray to him in well-composed Forms than in those that are not so; because it is more for his Honour, and the Credit of his Worship. And it is not enough *not to displease him*, but we are also to *please him as far as we can*.

And yet farther, *Meanness* is but one of the Circumstances upon which we refuse to *join in the publick Forms*; and therefore tho' this Objection should be taken away, yet we may be *Dissenters* notwithstanding, without any Fault at all. Tho' the Example of Christ would *satisfy* us upon the Head of *mean Forms*, yet it would be no Argument for our joining in the *English*, if they have other Circumstances more disputable than that of Meanness attending them. It was much easier for him to conform to the *Jewish Liturgy*, than it is for us to conform to *Ours*, all things considered. He is no Pattern to us therefore in this Case, who have Difficulties to encounter with, which he had not. And pardon me, if I say I can't think he would have conformed to it, if so much had been required of him as of us; that is, if he had had so many things as we have to be *satisfied* about, if he had been necessarily obliged to have submitted to such Restraints, and were to come under such Obligations as we are by Vertue of a *Subscription and Declaration*. Under these Circumstances it seems to me he would not have conformed to *that Liturgy*, any more than we do to *this*. And the Reason why I think so is, because he has given us the Liberty that we contend for against such *Impositions*, and I scarce think he has given us more Liberty than he would have taken himself in a like Case.

I apprehend indeed that you may say here, that what I alledge only concerns *Ministerial Conformity*, and not *Lay Conformity*; for it is only *that*, which has these Difficulties, attending it. I answer, its
true,

true, it does so. But then I say, 1. That you have confined his Example to neither, and therefore I may consider it either way, as it affects either the one or the other. 2. You would do well to let us know, how the Blessed Jesus *joined in those Forms*, whether as a *Minister* or as a *private Person*, or whether as *Both*, sometimes as *one*, and sometimes as the *other*; that we may know who are the Persons particularly concerned to imitate him, whether *both*, or *one only*; and if *one only*, which of the two it is. 3. If I can but excuse the *Dissenting Ministers* from Conformity, by making it appear that they act not Inconsistent with the Example of Christ, there will be no Difficulty in bringing off the *Laiety* clear of all Guilt in adhering to them. And really any Communion in general that bears hard upon the *Clergy*, is not like to be easy to the *Laity*. They must come in for their share of *Hardships*, *Restraints* and *Impositions*. Nay so far as the *Clergy* are confined, the *Laity* are too; for they can have things no otherwise than as the *Clergy* are directed and obliged to dispense them to them. For *their own Sakes* therefore they ought to insist upon the Liberty that is due to the *Clergy*. And we see how true this is in Fact in the Case of the Church of *Rome*, which has enslaved the *People* by first hampering the *Priests*. *Ministers*, in short, are not to be considered as a separate Body from the *People*, but in Relation to them, and therefore what affects them, affects the *People* too.

And then 3. As for his *teaching his own Disciples a Set Form to pray by*, which is here produced in Favour of *Set Forms* in the general, tho' I should allow you the *Fact*, yet not the *Consequence* that you would draw from it, and that you must draw from it to make it serve your purpose, *viz.* That our Saviour hereby put them in the way of praying *only*, or *ordinarily by Set Forms*, in opposition

to *our way of praying*: For you must carry the Consequence as far as this if you would urge it upon us. This Consequence therefore I cannot allow. I will grant you indeed that we may infer from hence, that the use of a Set Form is not *contrary to the Will of God*, or a *Corruption*, but that it is very *Lawful*; and upon some Occasions too very *Expedient*, viz. as an help for the *Young and Unexperienced*, and those that can't pray *pertinently, judiciously and methodically*, without it, which was the Case of the *Disciples* when this *Form* was given to them. But I see no reason to go any farther. It *allows* that way of praying, but does not *recommend* it, or give it the preference to ours by any means. And tho' it was given the *Disciples* with that very Design *to teach them to pray*, yet not to *teach them to pray by Set Forms only*, or *mainly*. One single *Form* could never answer that purpose; a whole *Liturgy* must have been given them for such an End; and I verily believe our Lord would have given them such a one, if he had designed to have put them in that way of praying; or, if not at that time, yet at least when there came to be a necessity for it, viz. when the *Jewish Liturgy* must be laid aside, as not fit for the Service of his Church after his *Resurrection*. Or he would have put his Apostles upon drawing up a *Liturgy* for themselves and the rest of the Christian Church, if he had not done it himself. One or other of these Things was absolutely necessary to serve his purpose, because the *Jewish Liturgy* being taken away, and no other substituted in the room of it, they must be without any one at all.

But not to insist upon this, it is plain, I think, they *did not so understand him*, if we may judge by their *Practice*, as without doubt we may; and if they did not so understand him, I see no Reason that we have to do so, for they were likelier to come at his Meaning than we, and certainly did so, and

and practised accordingly. Let us then look into their *Practice*; and see if they took this Method that they are here supposed by you to be directed to. Now that they did not in *some particular Cases*, is evident; and that it was not so in *their ordinary Worship*, is very probable. 1. That they did not take this Course in *some particular Cases*, is evident. As for Instance, from that Prayer of St. Peter, *Acts* iv. that of St. Stephen, *Acts* vii. that of St. Peter or St. John, *Acts* viii. that of St. Peter, *Acts* ix. that of St. Paul, *Acts* xx. and *Acts* xxviii.

Which Instances look more our way than yours, and may be much more easily interpreted of *Free Prayer* than of *Set Forms*. For 1. The Occasions were so Extraordinary, that we can't suppose they had any Forms at hand suited to them. 2. Their Prayers are so immediately connected with those Occasions, that there was not time to compose pertinent Set Forms, or at least not for those who joined with them to have Copies of them, and be acquainted with them; so that they must be New, and unheard before to their Fellow-Worshippers, even tho' they had been pre-composed by the Apostles. And 3. There was no Necessity that they should compose Forms, either for their own sake, or for the sake of those that joined with them, being so full of the Holy Ghost as they were.

And 2. That *they did not take the Method of praying by Set Forms in their ordinary Worship*, is very probable. Their History indeed says nothing of this expressly, either one way or the other. But there are some Passages from whence we may make a pretty near guess how they conducted themselves in this Affair. We may learn *their Practice* from that of the Churches they planted, which to be sure was answerable to it. Now that the Churches in their Time did not pray by *Set Forms*, (which yet they would have done, if the Apostles had led them the way by their Example,)

Example,) we may fairly gather from that Prayer of the Church for St. Peter, *Acts* xii. 5, 12. who was then in Prison, and designed for Execution the next Day : That in all appearance was such a Prayer as we pray, and not one by *Set Forms*, for the Reasons mention'd under the foregoing Head. Let us look also into the *ordinary Worship* of the Church, and we shall find the Case the same. For this purpose I would refer you to 1 *Cor.* xiv. 14, 15. *For if I pray in an unknown Tongue, my Spirit prays, but my Understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, and with the Understanding also.* I argue from the Case that the *Apostle* there refers to, *viz. praying in an unknown Tongue*, one of the Faults which that Church had run into. Now we can't reasonably think, that the Church had a Liturgy, (nor consequently that any other Churches then had any such Form ; for no Reason can be assigned why the Church of *Corinth* should be singular in this Matter ;) when there were Persons in it who prayed in an unknown Tongue ; but it appears more probable, that they were left to their Liberty in Prayer, otherwise they would not have been guilty of such a Fault : Unless we can suppose Prayers drawn up for them in an unknown Tongue, which is a Thing hardly to be imagined ; or that they translated them into an unknown Tongue in the use of them, which is every whit as inconceivable. And it is very remarkable, that the *Apostle*, when he comes to cure this Fault, does not recommend a Liturgy to prevent it for the future, when yet there seemed to be a very plausible Occasion for it, as plausible as ever could be pretended in After-Ages ; but only tells them, that they ought not to have done so, and charges them not to do so again, and leaves them to their Liberty as before.

Upon the whole, I can't but think the *Apostles* used our way of Praying, and not that of *Set Forms*,
and

and consequently, that they did not understand our Saviour as putting them upon that way of Praying when he gave them this Form. And it is from hence that we take Encouragement in our way. Which I think we may safely do ; and that notwithstanding the great difference between them and us, as they had such *Extraordinary Capacities* for this Service above us. That we can't do it so well as they, is no Argument why we should not do it at all ; any more than it would be so in the Case of *Preaching*, in which they exceeded us as much as in that of *Prayer*.

After all that has been said, you will allow me, *Reverend Sir*, to leave the World to judge, whether you had any Reason for that stinging Reflection, *This may satisfy our Dissenters, if any Thing can satisfy Men so perversely bent after their own ways, &c.*

You proceed to put Forms and no Forms, Mean Forms and Elegant ones, upon a perfect Equality, with regard to the Favour and Acceptance of God. *The Truth is*, (say you, p. 378.) *whether there be a Form, or no Form, or whether the Form be elegantly or meanly composed, nothing of this availeth to the recommending of our Prayers to God. It is the true and sincere Devotion of the Heart only, that can make them Acceptable to him. For it is this only that gives Life and Vigour and true Acceptance to all our Religious Addresses to him. Without this, how elegantly and moving soever the Prayer may be composed, and with how much seeming Fervour and Zeal it may be poured out, all is as Dead Matter, and of no Validity in the Presence of our God. But if we bring this with us to his Worship, any Form of Prayer, provided it be of Sound Words, may be sufficient to make us and our Worship acceptable unto him, and obtain Mercy, Peace and Pardon from him. For it is not the Finess of Speech, or the Elegancy of Expression, but the Sincerity of the Mind and the true Devotion of the Heart only, that God regards in all our Prayers which we offer up unto him.*

him. Give me leave, Sir, to say, that this I fear is not true, or however that it cannot answer your Design.

1. I fear this is not true. I grant that God looks at the Heart *Chiefly*, but I can't say that he does so *only*. Devotion is the main thing he insists upon, but other things come in for their proper share in his Regard too. He is not wholly Indifferent to them, tho' he sets the Devotion of the Heart above them. He expects that every one should serve him with his best; and he looks for more and better from some than from others. If a Person can serve him better with Forms than without, he is to do so; and on the other Hand, if a Person can serve him better without Forms than with them, he is to serve him in that manner. So far *Forms* and *no Forms* are equal to him, and no farther; and with regard to *mean Forms* and *elegant ones* in particular, it can never be supposed that granting there should be equal Devotion in the use of them, they should be equally pleasing to God, because *mean ones* can never be so much for the Honour of God, and the Credit of Christian Worship in the World, as *elegant* and *well composed* Forms are.

But then, 2. Supposing this be true, it will not answer your End, which is to reconcile the Dissenters to the use of *Set Forms* in the general, and to the use of yours in particular, which they look upon to be *Mean*. For tho' both were equally pleasing to God in themselves, *Forms* as pleasing as *no Forms*, and *mean ones* as those of the best Composition, yet still if they are not equally *Edifying* to our selves, we may lawfully refuse to join in them. For we are directed in our Worship to manage all to the best *Edification*, 1 Cor. xiv. 26. And cannot more effectually please God than by consulting our own Edification. Now we apprehend, that

is better provided for in our way of Prayer than by *Set Forms*, and without doubt by *excellent Forms* better than by *mean ones*.

I intirely agree with you in what follows, p. 379. *It is true, a new gingle of Words, and a fervent Delivery of them by the Minister in Prayer, may have some Effect upon the Auditors, and often raise, in such of them as are affected this way, a Devotion, which otherwise they would not have. But this being wholly Artificial, which all drops again, as soon as the Engine is removed that raised it, it is none of that true habitual Devotion, which can alone render us Acceptable to our God in any of our Addresses to him. This we ought to bring with us, whenever we come into the House of God to worship before him. But I cannot add with you, And with this in any Form, which is of Sound Words, we may pray acceptably to him, that is, equally so, unless it be the best that we can come at. I allow this is Necessary, so that none can ever be acceptable to him without it; as you add; but that it will make up known voluntary Defects, is what I can't assent to without better Reason. Besides, you suppose herein what I hardly esteem possible, that there can be true Devotion in the use of those Forms, which are known and thought to be Mean by the very Person who uses them. Another, who has a better Opinion of them, may use the very same with great Devotion: But he that comes to them with this prejudice, must, I believe, find his Devotion very much to flag in the use of them: I am sure mine would in such a Case.*

I have but one thing more to take notice of. And that is this. *But whether any Form of such Sound Words can be well preserved in those Extemporary Effusions of Prayer, which some delight in; whether it does not often lead them into Indecent, and sometimes into Blasphemous Expressions, to the great Dishonour of God,*

E

and

and the Damage of Religion, it behoves those, who are for this way, seriously to consider. Now we have consider'd this, and that seriously too, and can't find but that a Form of Sound Words may be well preserved, and very well too, in that way of praying that we delight in; and that it does not often lead us into Indecent, and much less into Blasphemous Expressions, to the great dishonour of God, and the damage of Religion. How far some Persons may be guilty here, I can't say, but I can assure you, the generality are not. And as for personal Failings of this sort, or any other, they are by no Means chargeable upon the Way it self, but on the Imprudence of the faulty Person. And here you go upon a groundless Supposition, that our Prayers are Extemporary Effusions, as you call them. By which I suppose you mean that they are Unpremeditated, and mere sudden Thoughts. Whereas we not only allow Premeditation, but plead for it, and practice it; not leaving the Service wholly to the present Suggestions of the Imagination, but calling in Prudence for our Aid beforehand (especially upon extraordinary Occasions) to furnish the Materials, to lay the Method, to proportion the Length to the Occasion, and to form the Expression. And so nothing Indecent, and much less Blasphemous, is ever like to creep in: It must break thro' a great deal of Caution and Care if it does, and that it is not like to do. I won't say indeed that all take this Method; but I am sure the Principles of Dissenters oblige them to act in this manner, and from my Acquaintance with them, I know that this is the Practice of many.

But supposing our Way were liable to this Inconvenience, you will remember, Sir, that, yours has others often attending it, which a wise and good Man would guard against too, viz. Superstition, and a great Number of Forms, and Ceremonies, together

gether with intricate and perplexed Rubricks about the use of them. And this is what you yourself have given me Occasion to observe by what you say of the Jewish Forms. Your Words are these, p. 274. *These at first were very few, but since they are increased unto a very large Bulk, which makes their Synagogue Service very long and tedious; and the Rubrick by which they regulate it is very perplexed and intricate, and incumbered with many Rites and Ceremonious Observances; in all which they equal, if not exceed, both the Superstition, and also the Length, of the Popish Service.* All this indeed is but the possible Consequence of Forms, not the Certain one: And the same I say of the other, this, and that, and the other thing, is but the possible Consequence of Free-prayer, not the Certain one; and therefore not to be charged upon the way it self, or any Argument for the laying it aside, as you seem to intimate it to be.

Thus, Doctor, I have considered all that you have seen fit to offer upon this Head, and I hope with all the Deference that is due to You, and all the Impartiality that is due to Truth. And tho' I have not been so happy as to see Evidence enough in what you have offered on this Argument to induce me to become your Profelyte, yet I can assure you, I am,

Your great Admirer

and humble Servant.

W. J.



T O T H E

Author of the Occasional Paper.

S I R,



Question not but you have read with great Pleasure, the very learned and excellent *Connection of the History of the Old and New Testament*, by Dr. Prideaux; and are fully sensible how much the learned World is indebted to him, for having finish'd a Noble and Useful Design in so Masterly a Way. I cannot doubt but you have, with me, a very high Esteem for a Person, whose Writings deserve so well, and which are likely to be valued as long as a Taste of good Learning shall remain among us.

Yet, Sir, if I may be permitted to guess at your Temper by your Writings, you are not so prejudic'd in Favour of any Persons, how deserving soever, as not to see their Mistakes; tho' you know how to see them without diminishing any Thing of that Esteem and Respect that is due to their real Merit.

In this Confidence it is, I take the Liberty to send you some Strictures on one Passage of the Doctor's 2d Vol., assuring you, that it is far from any Vanity of Criticising a great Author; much less with any Intention to derogate from the Reputation of his Excellent Book, which loses nothing in my own Esteem on any other Account; that I
- think

think the following Passage deserves a Publick Observation.

The Doctor, among the Reasons he gives for his large Account of the *Jewish* and other Cycles, made use of for the Time of *Easter*, has given this for One, " To open the Way to a better Understanding of the Modern Dispute, which our Dissenters have here set on Foot among us. For they alledge it as one Reason of their Dissention, that *Easter* is put wrong in the Kalendar of the Common Prayer-Book, and that therefore they cannot give their Assent and Consent thereto. It is a very odd Thing, (*he adds,*) that this Sort of People, who are against keeping any *Easter* at all, should raise any Quarrel about the Time of its Observance." *

I must own, I was surpris'd at reading this Passage. That the Doctor, in a Work of such different Nature, and much better Use, should think of falling upon his Protestant Brethren, and endeavour to expose them for a supposed Weakness; but more especially, that he should choose to do so in a Case where he seems so much to mistake them, and the Controversy they have had on that Foot.

For, with Submission, they have never rais'd any Quarrel at all about the Time of observing *Easter*. They have not, that I know of, thought it worth quarrelling about; much less have they made it a considerable Reason, or any Reason at all for their Dissent. They have indeed apprehended, that a Declaration of Assent to all and every Thing contained and prescribed in and by the Book of Common Prayer, &c. according to the Act of Uniformity, did include an Assent to the Rule

* Preface to 2d Vol. p. 7.

Rule for the Time of observing *Easter* which is found in that Book. This Rule they have also apprehended such, as they could not so well Assent to. But in this they raised no Quarrel themselves about the Time of observing *Easter*; and as far as I know the Dissenters, they are not a Sort of People ever like to raise one. Yet sure when they are called upon to give their Assent to any Thing, they may without Reflection judge whether they can Assent to it or no. And they have not yet alledged it as one Reason of their Dissention, that *Easter* is put wrong in the Kalendar; but that they apprehend they are required to Assent to it as right, when yet they take it to be wrong, which is a very different Matter.

How the Doctor came thus to represent the Case, I am at a loss to imagine. Especially when, in Answer to their Objection, he aims so much to take off the Difficulty of their Assent, as seems to shew, he was well aware of the true State of the Question, however he came here to forget it.

Since the Doctor then has been pleased to bring this Question once more on the Stage, in a Book universally read, and deservedly esteem'd; if you shall think it proper to give this Letter a Place in your Paper, I will endeavour to give the World a fairer Account of it than I think Dr. *Prideaux* has done.

The Objection stands thus. “ The Rule in the
 “ Kalendar says, *Easter-Day* is always the first *Sun-*
 “ day after the first Full-Moon, which happens next
 “ after the One and Twentieth Day of *March*, &c.
 “ but this will seldom be found true, according to
 “ the Tables in the Common Prayer Book, and so
 “ that the Rule and Tables disagree with each
 “ other.”

The Doctor owns this Objection would be true, were it the Natural Full-Moon that is *meant* in the Rule: But he supposes, “ Besides the Natural Full-Moon, there is an Ecclesiastical Full-Moon, that is, a Full-Moon Day so called by the Church, tho’ there be no Natural Full-Moon thereon; and of this Ecclesiastical Full-Moon, the Rule and Tables are to be understood. * ”

Now the Gentlemen that have objected the Difference between the Rule and Tables, have indeed thought, that the *Meaning* and *Intention* of the Rule, as also of the several Cycles, as well as the Invention of *Golden Numbers*, *Paschal Terms*, &c. were to bring the Ecclesiastical Computation of *Easter*, and the Moveable Feasts depending thereon, to an Agreement with the Astronomical Revolutions of the Sun and Moon, as the Doctor himself elsewhere observes †. So far then as a Rule design’d only for this End is wrong in the Use and Application of it, so far they think they may judge that the Rule, and the Tables design’d to answer it, do not agree with each other, because the *Meaning* and *Intention* of the whole was to find out in each Year, the Real and Natural Full-Moon, which happened first after the Vernal Equinox, but which it is confess’d the Tables do not reach to. They enquire not whether it was a Matter of any Importance to be done in this or another Way: But since it is intended to be done this Way, they not only observe, That the Tables by a small Error in the Nineteen Years Cycle, but by length of Time grown considerable, do not answer this *Intention*, and therefore differ from the *Meaning* of the Rule.

This,

* P. 8.

† P. 231, 232.

This, it is true, is only an Astronomical, and not a Theological Error: But if their Assent was required to it, as they apprehend in this Case it was, they could not give it to any the least and most innocent known Error without the Guilt of Falshood, which is to be sure a Theological Crime. And however they or others may innocently consent to the Use of it, which the Doctor says is all that the Declaration of Assent and Consent obliges to: Yet he ought in Justice to them to let the World know, That they never objected to the Use of it; but went all along upon this Foot, That the Act obliges to Assent to the Truth, as well as Consent to the Use, which on supposal of an Error and Disagreement they could not innocently do.

But it seems to Dr. Prideaux, that neither "the Kalendar nor this Rule belonging to it is within that Declaration (of Assent and Consent); for he thinks it cannot be brought under any of the Particulars mentioned in the Act which requires it." This is at least a Piece of News they never heard before; tho', if it should prove true, I dare answer for the Dissenters, they are not so fond of this or any other Reason for Separation, but they would be obliged to the Doctor if he could remove them all upon the same Foot: But there is Reason to fear it wants further Confirmation. For the Assent required by the Act of Uniformity is to all and every Thing contain'd and prescribed in and by the Book, entitled, *the Book of Common Prayer*. Now this Rule and Kalendar are found in the Books so Entitled: One of which was annexed to the Act, and is the Book intended in the Declaration. And both the Rule and the Kalendar are of such use to the Form and Order of many Parts of the Common Prayer, that they solely direct the Time of using the Epistles, Gospels and Collects

Collects for all the Moveable Feasts, and seem therefore intended as a very necessary and extensive Rubrick. Upon the whole, Sir, what could tempt Dr. Prideaux to end with this severe Reflection? "To make such a Trifle to be a Reason of breaking the Communion, and separating from the Church, is what Men of common Sense or common Integrity may be ashamed of. — This shews how hard they are put to it to find Reasons for their Separation, when they urge such a wretched and frivolous One for it as this *."

I could not help making a melancholy Reflection upon reading these Words: What mighty Power (thought I,) what strange Influence may Party-Prejudice have, even upon the greatest Minds, to turn them aside from noble Views to little trivial Matters, and, which is yet worse, provoke them to unreasonable and uncharitable Reflections on their Brethren? Has what the Dissenters object to the Rule for finding *Easter* been ever made by them a Ground for breaking Communion or separating from the Church? Has the Church so much as ever been blamed by them for using it, or any the least scruple made of Communion with it on that Account? Has it ever been used farther than as one Difficulty, among many far greater, in the Form of Assent supposed to be required to Ministerial Conformity? And in that View is it so altogether without shew of Reason, that they deserve to be treated as Men either wanting Common Sense or Common Honesty? However frivolous the Objection may be, methinks it can hardly call for such Contempt and Reproach. And surely neither Prudence nor Charity

F

will
allow

allow it, where what is censured as most frivolous and trifling in the Objection, is really no Part of it, but centers at last in the Censurer's own Invention or Mistake.

It was very surprizing to me to find such a Reason formally given by the Doctor in his Preface, for the Account of the *Jewish* and other Cycles in his Book. That Account might well have passed, without any such Reason for it, as very proper to the Design it self. It seems a Step out of his Way on purpose for that unkind Reflection on his Dissenting Brethren, rather than any needful Apology for himself.

And I the rather think so, because another Reason he gives for it could hardly have any greater Weight with him than only to keep this a little in Countenance; for the Dissention about *Easter* between our *British* and *Saxon* Ancestors did not stand in need of a new Explication; since the very same Account the Doctor gives of it was already given (to omit others) by a known Author in our own Language, Mr. Collier in his *Ecclesiastical History*. In the Account he gives of the Dispute on that Subject before King *Oswi* at *Whitby* then *Streane-shaleh*, he mentions both the Difference of the 84 Years Cycle continued in use by the *Britains*, and the 19 Years Cycle then in use with the *Romans*; and the *Roman* Custom of reckoning from the 15th Day of the Moon to the 21st † inclusive, when the *Britains* used to reckon from the 14th to the 20th.

I shall only add, I have so great an Esteem for your Judgment and the good Design you have

have to promote Impartial Liberty, and the General Good of Mankind, that if you so far approve of this Letter as to let it appear in the World in your Paper, it will be a great Satisfaction to,

Sir,

Your very humble Servant.

June 23.
1718.

Just Published

A Collection of the Occasional Papers for the Year 1716. Vol. I. With a Preface.

A Collection of the Occasional Papers for the Year 1717. Vol. II. With a Preface and a Table of Contents to both Volumes.

The Occasional Paper, Vol. III. Number I. Of the

The Occasional Paper, Vol. III. Number II. Of the

E R R A T A.

In the last Paper, Numb. II. Pag. 36. lin. 24. *for*, where *there cannot, read, where these cannot.*

The Occasional Paper

to be printed in the Year 1716 and the
Year 1717. and if you to far as
to be printed in the Year 1716 and the
Year 1717. and if you to far as



Tom very humble servant

Just Published

1717

A Collection of the Occasional Papers for the
Year 1716 Vol. I. with a Preface.

A Collection of the Occasional Papers for the
Year 1717 Vol. II. With a Preface and a Table of
Contents to both Volumes.

The Occasional Paper, Vol. III. Numb. I. Of Re-
probations.

The Occasional Paper, Vol. III. Numb. II. Of
Bugbears.

In the last Paper, Numb. II. Part II. of the
Year 1717. where the Editor



